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THE DRAMATIZATION OF THE ROBIN HOOD BALLADS

I. THE EXTANT MATERIAL

It has long been known that the Robin Hood plays are related in some way to the Robin Hood ballads, but just what this relation is has not been fully studied. Did the plays borrow from the ballads, or the ballads from the plays? Or do both go back to a common oral tradition? The material which will help us answer these questions is very scanty. There are three fragmentary Robin Hood plays, one certainly before 1475, the other two of unknown date.¹ Of the thirty-nine ballads on this subject only twelve can be dated with certainty before the seventeenth century.² The most important documents for this study are:

"A Gest of Robyn Hode" (probably before 1500), which is based on "Robin Hood, the Knight, and the Monk," "Robin Hood, Little John, and the Sheriff," "Robin Hood and the King," "Robin Hood's Death," and other ballads.³

"Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne," Percy MS, ca. 1650, date of composition unknown.

"Robin Hood and the Curtal Friar." Versions A and B go back to a common original ballad of unknown date.⁴

"Robin Hood and the Potter," in a MS of about 1500.⁵

"Robin Hood and the Butcher," after "Robin Hood and the Potter," and probably derived from it.⁵

"Robin Hood Rescuing Three Squires," which shows verbal resemblances to "The Curtal Friar."⁶

"Robin Hood and the Monk," before 1450.⁷

"Robin Hood and the Valiant Knight," which occurs first in eighteenth-century copies.

¹ Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, III, 90, prints the plays. They are reprinted in Manly's *Specimens*, I, 279-88.

² Child, *op. cit.*, III, 42.

³ Child, *op. cit.*, III, 42, names these four ballads as the sources of the "Gest." Clawson, *The Gest of Robin Hood* ("University of Toronto Studies," 1909), pp. 24, 55, 67, 76, 96, 122-23, 125-27, proves that several other separate ballads were used by the compiler of the "Gest."

⁴ Child, *op. cit.*, III, 120-22; Clawson, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-68.

⁵ Child, *op. cit.*, III, 108, 115; Clawson, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-73.

⁶ Child, *op. cit.*, III, 178.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROBIN HOOD PLAYS

The dramatic elements in the ballad have been pointed out so frequently that it will be necessary only to refer the reader to the work of Steenstrup, Hart, and Miller.¹ The chief interest of the balladist is in the single striking dramatic situation. In keeping with this chief interest of the balladist are the impersonality as regards the author, the omissions in the narrative, the shifting of time and place, the lack of synchronism of the events in the action, and the holding of the key of the situation to the close of the narrative. Most of these ballad traits are found also in the Robin Hood plays, which will be compared more closely with single ballads farther on. It is clear, I think, that the ballad contained dramatic elements strong enough to cause it to develop easily into drama. A little more stress on the action that accompanied the singing of the ballad, an additional development of the mimetic tendency at the expense of the songlike qualities, was all that was required to transform the ballad into a drama.

There is evidence to support the theory that this transformation was furthered by the fact that both ballads and plays were important features of the May-games. The references to Robin Hood in *Piers Plowman*, in the histories of Bower and Major, and in the Paston letters show that the Robin Hood legends were very popular with the common people.² By the fifteenth century Robin Hood had been taken over into the May-games. As Chambers points out,³ Robin the shepherd at once suggested Robin the outlaw. Robin and Marion were conventional names of shepherds and shepherdesses in the French *pastourelles*. These names form the title of Adan de la Halle's *Robin et Marion*, which is based on French *caroles* on the same subject. The identity of name between Robin the shepherd and Robin the outlaw, who had long been the hero of popular ballads, led to the merging of the two characters in the May-games. Robin soon brought the rest of his band into these festivities. There are numerous references to Robin Hood in

¹ Steenstrup, *The Medieval Popular Ballad* (transl. by E. G. Cox), p. 230; W. M. Hart, *Ballad and Epic*, p. 32; G. M. Miller, *The Dramatic Element in the Popular Ballad*, "University of Cincinnati Studies," January-February, 1905.

² These and other references are cited by Child, *op. cit.*, III, 40-41.

³ *The Mediaeval Stage*, I, 175-76.

connection with the May-games.¹ These accounts inform us that ballads and plays of Robin Hood were presented at these celebrations, that Robin and Marion presided over the festivities, and that archers sometimes impersonated Robin Hood and his men. Moreover, the two plays printed as one in the sixteenth century are described as "very proper to be played in May-games."

Other May-game ceremonies, such as mummings, morris dancing, ritual sacrifices, and weddings, took dramatic form.² It is natural to suppose, then, that the Robin Hood ballads, which were an important part of these games, took dramatic form there, and that the plays borrow from the ballads rather than that the ballads are indebted to the plays. That these plays were given before a crowd thoroughly familiar with the Robin Hood legend is seen by a reading of them. Much is taken for granted by the author; and a knowledge of the Robin Hood legend, which admittedly found its earliest expression in the ballads, is essential for the full understanding of these concise dramatic fragments.

III. THE RELATIVE DATE OF PLAYS AND BALLADS

Did any of the extant ballads serve as a model for the plays that have come down to us? Only the closest verbal similarities could give evidence to prove that a particular play is indebted to a particular ballad, for we do not know the dates of either the ballads or the plays. The question of exact date, however, is not so important in a study of this kind as it is in ordinary problems of the relations of plays to their sources. The very nature of ballad transmission makes it impossible to date a traditional ballad. To decide, therefore, which ballads influenced the plays, we must trace briefly the growth of the Robin Hood ballad cycles, determine the distinctive marks of each cycle, and find out which cycle shows the greatest similarity to the plays.

If we divide the ballads according to the conception of the hero we find two main groups. The first group comprises "Robin Hood,

¹ Child, *op. cit.*, III, 40 ff.; Strutt, *Sports and Pastimes* (ed. William Hone), Book IV, chap. liii, pp. 455-57, 459; C. R. Baskervill, "Some Evidence for Early Romantic Plays in England," *Mod. Phil.*, XIV, 229-59, especially 237-48. The lost plays listed on p. 247 seem to Professor Baskervill to be derived from early ballads.

² See Chambers, *op. cit.*, Vol. I; Beatty, "The Saint George, or Mummers' Plays," *Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters*, Vol. XV, Part II; and Baskervill, *Mod. Phil.*, XIV, 237 ff.

the Knight, and the Monk" (*ca.* 1450); "Robin Hood, Little John, and the Sheriff"; "Robin Hood and the King"; "Robin Hood's Death"; "Robin Hood and the Potter"; and "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne." In this group, as in the "Gest," Robin Hood is a yeoman who, for some reason not given, is outlawed. He is nevertheless courteous, generous, brave, pious, and, above all, deeply devoted to "Our Lady deere," for whose sake he treats all women with respect, and in whose name he does deeds of kindness. Though he does not scruple to levy on fat purses of barons, knights, and rich abbots and monks, he is generous to the poor. Manliness, good humor, and generosity are his chief attributes. Despite his lowly birth his bearing is kingly; even the king treats him as an equal. He is always successful in his fights. He never stoops to trickery in order to gain an unfair advantage over his adversaries. Little John, Scathlok, and Much are his attendants. Friar Tuck and Maid Marion do not appear in this cycle of ballads, which scholars are agreed in regarding as the earliest.

Judging from the ballads regarded as later than those that we have discussed, we see that Robin Hood soon came to be the best-known hero-outlaw. The popularity of the legend caused many imitators to write ballads concerning his deeds. In these poems, however, he undergoes a complete transformation. He is no longer the jaunty adventurer, successful in all feats of skill and strength. No longer is he "evermo the best." He often meets with defeat and sometimes with disgrace and humiliation. Romantic elements of lost relatives, distressed princesses, and lovely queens have intruded themselves into the heroic legend. These corrupt and servile imitations seem the result of commercializing the popularity of the hero in the earlier group of ballads. Some of these may have been written by members of a particular craft for the purpose of glorifying their trade, for in them there are many varieties of Robin's defeat by a member of some craft—a tinker, a tanner, a shepherd, a ranger, a peddler. In many the only motif is "Robin Hood met his match." In these later ballads also Friar Tuck plays a more important rôle. The "Gest" adds Gilbert of the White Hand to the band, which is steadily being increased by the addition of men who have won Robin's admiration by defeating him in fight.

These are the two groups that could have served as a model for the conception of the hero of the plays. A discussion of this conception is given in the comment on the three early Robin Hood plays. The treatment of Robin Hood is also connected with the development of well-marked ballad motifs.

According to the action of the central character, the extant ballads fall into three main groups. There are, of course, single ballads which represent other episodes in the life of Robin or his band, but these are mere additions to, or elaborations of, the three chief themes. The first of these groups comprises ballads which show how Robin Hood outwitted his archenemy, the sheriff of Nottingham. This group includes "Guy," "The Monk," "The Potter," "The Butcher," "The Three Squires," "Will Stutly," and "The Golden Arrow."

The second group describes a fight between Robin Hood and some opponent, generally a yeoman. Robin either meets his foe accidentally or, spurred on by rumors of his skill and bravery, goes out in search of him. Out of admiration for his opponent's skill and bravery Robin usually calls a halt in the fight and invites his foe to become a member of the band of outlaws. By this means of recruiting Robin steadily enlarges his band. The group is different from the first in that it contains later ballads which represent Robin as a contemptible and miserable coward, who stops at no trick to outwit an enemy. For example, in "Robin Hood and the Tinker" Robin blows his horn while the tinker is not looking. The treatment of the horn-blowing episode is an indication of the relative date of the ballad in which it occurs. To the second group belong "The Friar," "The Pinder," "Little John," "The Tinker," "Robin Hood Newly Revived," "The Scotchman," "The Ranger," and "The Tanner."

The third group also describes a fight, but there are several important differences in the conclusion of this fight, differences so great as to constitute a new class of ballads. Robin calls a halt in the fight, not out of admiration for his opponent's skill, but out of cowardice. Instead of inviting his opponent to join the band he proposes a drinking-bout or runs off at the first opportunity. The ballads in this group are "The Beggar," "The Bold Pedlars," "The Shepherd," and "Robin Hood's Delight."

Although it is not possible to determine the absolute date of any of these groups, it may be possible to fix their relative dates. The most important characteristics of the Robin Hood of the early ballads is that he is an outlaw, that he hates the clergy, and that he protects and befriends the poor and helpless. He is first of all an outlaw, and for this reason regards the sheriff of Nottingham as his archenemy. The earliest ballads and the "Gest" stress these ideas; they contain no references to Robin Hood's method of recruiting, and they never represent his defeat at the hands of an unworthy opponent. He voices many of the feelings of the middle classes: their hatred of a corrupt and greedy clergy, their disregard of unjust laws, their sympathy with the poor, and their admiration of bravery, skill, and fair play. There are no elements of romance in these early ballads, no giants, distressed damsels, lost relatives, or noble queens; they are heroic, not romantic, in spirit. Even if there were no other evidence of the relative dates of these groups, it would be absurd to suppose that the cowardly figure of the third group was transformed into the noble and admirable outlaw of the first group of ballads. We may safely say, I think, that the first group represents a more primitive Robin Hood than does group three.

But Robin Hood is more than an outlaw. He is the leader of an outlaw band. In "Robin Hood and the Monk," which is earlier than 1450, he is attended by Little John, Scathlok, and Much. The "Gest" adds Gilbert of the White Hand and Reynold.¹ In the "Gest" and in the first group of ballads, the group in which Robin outwits his enemy the sheriff, Robin appears at the head of a small band of outlaws, but we are not informed as to how he formed this band. The earliest ballads may have represented him as the head of a small group of outlaws, or these followers may have been added to his band one at a time. The attendants of Robin may have been suggested by the followers of Hereward the Wake, Fulk fitz Warin, or some other outlaw. We can do little more than theorize concerning these lost ballads; but we do know that the process of recruiting goes steadily on in the ballads, and that some of the recruits are certainly later additions. The chief interest

¹ For the confusion of Little John and Reynold Grenelefe see Clawson, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

of the balladist in the second group of ballads, the recruiting group, was not in the explanation of how Robin increased the number of his followers but in the fight that preceded Robin's invitation to his opponent. The fight's the thing. The invitation to his opponent was used to show Robin's generosity in praising a worthy opponent and in admitting that he had had enough, and to explain how Robin's band grew constantly larger. The essential characteristic of this group is the fight which ends in the invitation to join the band. Whether this motif is later than that of group one does not matter; the important fact is that both groups of ballads treat Robin Hood with respect and dignity.¹ The fight which always preceded the entrance of a new member into the band, and which constituted, as it were, a part of his initiation, is also present in the third group of ballads, the group in which the fight sometimes ends in a drinking-bout. It is improbable that the fight which ends in a carousal is earlier in origin than the fight which represents a more admirable side of Robin's nature. If these suppositions are correct, then, we may arrange the three groups of ballads according to their relative dates.²

IV. THE RELATION OF THE PLAYS TO SINGLE BALLADS

This classification of the ballads was necessary before the relation of each play to its possible sources could be determined. One would naturally expect that the earliest ballad themes were dramatized earlier and more often than the others. And this is exactly what one finds to be the case in the three extant Robin Hood plays. "Robin Hood and the Knight," before 1475, is a dramatization of Robin's outwitting the sheriff (of Nottingham?), and is therefore connected with the first group of ballads, which, as we have seen, is the earliest of the three groups. "Robin Hood and the Friar" describes a fight which ends in the addition of a new member to the

¹ The fact that the earliest extant ballads deal with the outwitting of the sheriff explains why a small band of outlaws appear in the earliest ballads. A companion was necessary to assist Robin in tricking the sheriff.

² Such an arrangement does not imply that a single ballad dealing with one of these themes, the recruiting story for example, is necessarily later than any extant ballad in group one. There are complex fusions, cross-borrowings, and imitations that prevent safe estimates as to the date of these ballads.

What has been said concerning the development of the Robin Hood story borrows many ideas from Professor Child's masterly and almost definitive discussion.

band.¹ "Robin Hood and the Potter" tells of Robin's defeat at the hands of a potter. Since the end of the play is missing we cannot be certain as to how the play ended. I believe, however, that the play is a variation of the theme of the first play. In the first place there is no indication that the fight ended in a drinking-bout or in an addition to the band. There is one bit of evidence, however, that points to the conclusion that the episode described in the play was given merely to furnish Robin with a disguise, as in the ballad account, with which to outwit the sheriff. The potter's boy Jack says:

Out, alas, that ever I sawe this daye!
For I am clene out of my waye
From Notyngham towne.²

It is significant that each of the extant plays, which probably represent a number of plays on the subject, deals with a theme that was a popular and widespread ballad motif. It appears certain, therefore, that the Robin Hood plays are dramatizations of the best-known ballad stories. A closer study of the plays will furnish additional evidence for this statement. I shall first examine the plays to see if there are any traces of the influence of ballads in general and shall then discuss the relations between the plays and their nearest analogues.

Certain ballad-like qualities are to be found in the plays. The second and third plays have distinctively ballad introductions which contain absolutely no action:

Now stand ye forth, my mery men all,
And harke what I shall say;
Of an adventure I shal you tell,
The which befell this other day.
As I went by the hygh-way,
With a stout frere I met,
And a quarter-staffe in his hande.³

¹ "Robin Hood and the Friar" is the poorest of the three plays. The vile epithets, the Latin words, the learned references and explanations, and the ranting tone of Friar Tuck's speeches are not in keeping with the spirit of the early ballads or the other plays. It has been seen also that Friar Tuck was a late addition to the band. The presence of his dogs in the play is entirely unmotivated and may be a slavish imitation of the ballad account, in which the dogs play an important part.

² Lines 149-51. In referring to the plays I shall cite Manly's *Specimens*, I, 279-88.

³ "Robin Hood and the Friar," p. 281, ll. 1-7. "Robin Hood and the Potter" has an introduction which is almost the exact counterpart of this passage. One may borrow from the other, or both may go back to a common original ballad.

There are several cases of ballad-like repetition. Such repetition, of course, is not confined to ballads; it appears also in plays that have no relation to ballads, for example, in the *Ludus Coventriae* and in other folk plays. But the presence of such repetition is to be expected in plays which are, as we suppose, based on ballads. Typical examples are to be found in Play II, lines 16-17, 20-21, 96-104; Play III, lines 145, 147, 155, 157, 165, 168, 178, 184.

Again, Robin's request for permission to blow his horn is a common ballad episode, which appears in "The Shepherd," "The Tinker," "The Valiant Knight," "The Three Squires," etc. It is not surprising, then, to find this request in the second play.

The plays are similar to the ballads in presenting usually a single brief situation. Omissions and transitions also are common to both plays and ballads. In both, the dialogue is often unsigned, and confused and inconsistent passages occur frequently. Such confused passages are particularly noticeable in the plays, which are almost meaningless to one who does not know the legend as it appears in the ballads. This confusion is not due primarily to the fragmentary condition of the plays but rather to the assumption on the part of the author that the story is well known. One example will suffice. In the third play Little John bets his master twenty pounds that he would not "dare medle with that potter man for man." Robin promptly takes the bet. We are left to suppose that all except Robin leave the stage. The potter's boy Jack enters. Robin insults him and his master by calling them vile names and by breaking the pots on the ground. The potter enters and plans to avenge the insult. Just as he and Robin are beginning to fight the latter calls out for Little John:

Lyttle John, where art thou?

Here, mayster, I make God avowe [193-94].

We are not prepared for Little John's prompt reply to his master's call, for apparently he has not been on the stage. His presence is explained by the ballad version, in which, as we are informed, Little John and the other members of the band hide in the bushes to watch the fight between their master and the proud potter. The author of the play was evidently dramatizing a story so well known, both to himself and to his audience, that he did not take the trouble

to explain anything fully. The plays, then, are obviously based on familiar ballad themes. It is not certain that we have the particular ballads which the authors of the plays used, but we do have ballads which are very close to the stories treated in the plays.

The first play is based chiefly on "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne," or on a ballad very similar to it. The date of "Guy" is not known, but the ballad may have been written early enough to serve as a model for the play, which is dated before 1475. A somewhat similar story appears in "Robin Hood and the Monk," which is as early as 1450. Fricke¹ believes that "Guy" is an offshoot or appendix to "The Monk," in which Little John rescues his master from the sheriff. The feeling that Robin in turn should rescue Little John and repay his kindness gave rise to the ballad of "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne." These two ballads have several motifs in common: the capture of a member of the band, the disguise, the trick on the sheriff, the rescue of the captured outlaw, the capture and death of Robin's enemy. Verbal resemblances confirm Fricke's theory. The relation of the drama to "Guy" will appear more clearly if we compare the two versions of the story.

A knight goes out in search of Robin Hood. He is unnamed in the play; toward the end of the ballad we learn that his name is Guy. A contest of skill takes place between the two: archery in the ballad is proposed by Robin; archery, casting the stone and the axletree, and perhaps wrestling are proposed by the knight in the play. In the ballad the knight asks who his opponent is; in the play we have no indication as to how the knight found out Robin's name. They fight to the finish. This contest is described in detail in the ballad (20 lines); it is briefly treated in the play (2 lines). Robin kills the knight and disguises himself in his clothes. According to the play Robin meets a man who tells him that Robin Hood and his men have been taken by the sheriff. In the ballad Robin takes Guy's weapons and goes to Barnsdale to see how his men are faring. The ballad explains how Robin outwits the sheriff and frees Little John by impersonating Guy, and how the two outlaws kill the sheriff. In the play, as Robin approaches the scene of the

¹ Cited by Child, *op. cit.*, III, 96.

battle he sees Friar Tuck fighting bravely against heavy odds. He arrives just in time to see his men captured by the sheriff. The rest of the play is lacking, but we may safely assume that it told how Robin followed his men and released them.

The variation from "Guy," such as the abrupt Friar Tuck incident, may be purely arbitrary, or may be due to another ballad on the subject. Although the story is similar to that of "Guy," we need not suppose that the author ever heard this particular ballad.¹ The chief interest of the play is not the fight, which is treated with great brevity, but the disguise and the trick on the sheriff. This motif connects the play with a large group of ballads, of which "Guy" and "The Monk" are good examples. If this is not the leading theme of the play, Robin's disguise is absolutely unintelligible.

"Robin Hood and the Valiant Knight" is similar in some respects to the play. Although this corrupt ballad is very late, it may be based on an older ballad. No one who has read this poor imitation would think of accusing the author of inventing anything in it. A knight, Sir William by name, goes out at the head of a hundred men to bring Robin Hood to the sheriff. Leaving his men some distance behind him, he goes to the tent of the outlaw, whom he recognizes at sight. After a brief parley they fight. Each blows his horn and summons a band of men. After a long and bloody fight, in which Robin receives a mortal wound, the forces separate. In the play the knight blows his horn as in the ballad, but apparently for no reason whatever, for nothing comes of it. This action is probably a reminiscence of some ballad in which the knight's horn played as important a part as it does in "The Valiant Knight." In this ballad, as in the play, the knight recognizes Robin at sight. The play, therefore, is not largely indebted to any single extant ballad. The variations from "Guy," the closest parallel, may have been invented by the author, or may be derived from some lost ballad which combined elements of "Guy," "The Monk," and "The Valiant Knight."

The nearest parallel to the second play, "Robin Hood and the Friar," is found in the ballad of "Robin Hood and the Curtal Friar."

¹ There are no verbal resemblances between this ballad and the play.

In the ballad Little John's marksmanship is the occasion of Scathelok's mention of the prowess of a certain friar of Fountains Abbey. Robin vows that he will neither eat nor drink until he has found that friar. Hiding his men in the bushes, he accosts the friar and demands that the friar carry him over the stream. The friar obeys and then forces Robin to return the favor. Robin again demands to be carried over. Apparently the friar obeys meekly enough; but when he gets in midstream he suddenly throws Robin into the water. The inevitable fight follows. In vain Robin shoots arrow after arrow at the friar, who deftly catches them on his shield. They then fight with swords for six hours. Both ask a boon.

The fryar sett his neave to his mouth
A loud blast he did blow [A, stanza 16].

Then follows a fight between Robin's men and the friar's dogs.

In the play Robin, who has had a bitter encounter with the friar, asks:

Is there any of my mery men all
That to that frere wyll go,
And bryng hym to me forth-withall
Whether he wyll or no? [14-17].

Little John accepts the challenge and vows to bring the friar to Robin, "whether he wyll or no." The friar's immediate appearance on the scene saves Little John the trouble of seeking him out. The friar enters with

Deus hic! Deus hic! God be here!
Is not this a holy worde for a frere?
God save all this company!
But am not I a jolly fryer? [22-25].¹

He says that he has come in search of Robin Hood and vows that he will become a member of the band if Robin defeats him in fight; but if Robin is defeated the friar will force him to be his knave,

And leade these dogges all three [45].

Upon Robin's entrance they bandy words. Then follows the ducking, which, as in the ballad, ends in a fight. Robin asks for a boon,

¹ The character of the friar has been commented on in a note on p. 16.

the permission to blow for his favorite hound. At the sound of the horn Robin's men come trooping in. The friar is granted the same boon and blows for his men, who fight Robin's band. Upon Robin's invitation to join the band the friar dismisses his men and agrees to become a member of the band of outlaws.

There are such verbal resemblances between the play and the ballad as the following:

Lye ther, knave! Chose whether thou wylte sinke or swym [81].
And chuse thee, chuse thee, fine fellow,
Whether thou wilt sink or swym [B, stanza 19].

Blow on, ragged knave, without any doubt,
Untyll bothe thyne eyes starte out [95-96].
Now fute on, fute on, thou cutted fryar [A, stanza 15].
Of thy blasts I have no doubt;
I hope thou'lt blow so passing well
Till both thy eyes fall out [B, stanza 26].

The rhyme on "fee" and "free" (110-11) echoes the rhyme in stanza 39 of the ballad.

The play of "Robin Hood and the Potter" in the early editions follows abruptly after the episode of Robin and the friar. The closest ballad parallel to this play is "Robin Hood and the Potter." The ballad opens with a stanza of description, which is followed by a call for attention. The play opens with Robin's request for attention to his story. In the ballad Robin is

Among hes mery maney,
He was ware of a prowde potter,
Cam dryfing owyr the ley [stanza 4].

He comments on the potter's discourtesy:

Yonder comet a prod potter, seyde Robin,
That long hayt hantyd his wey;
He was neuer so corteys a man
On peney of pawage to pay [stanza 5].¹

Little John, who has had a bout with the potter, bets his master forty shillings that no man can force the potter to pay. Accepting the bet, Robin challenges the potter and demands passage money.

¹ The last two lines are repeated in stanzas 11 and 13 of the ballad.

The potter refuses to pay and, seizing a staff from his cart, knocks Robin down. Robin admits that he is defeated and, after a rebuke from his opponent, proposes that they be friends. Robin disguises as a potter and goes to Nottingham, where he tricks the sheriff.

In the play Robin tells his men of an adventure he has had with "a proude potter":

This seven yere and more he hath used this waye,
Yet was he never so curteyse a potter
As one peny passage to paye [128-30].¹

He then asks:

Is there any of my mery men all
That dare be so bolde
To make the potter paie passage,
Either silver or golde? [131-34].

The question calls forth Little John's

Not I, master, for twenty pound redy tolde,
For there is not among us al one
That dare medle with that potter, man for man.
I felt his handes not long agone [135-38].²

Robin lays a wager of twenty pounds that he will make the potter "pay passage, maugre his head." The potter's boy Jack does not appear in the ballad, but in the play Robin insults the potter by breaking the pots Jack is carrying to Nottingham and by calling the potter a "cuckold." The potter soon enters to avenge the insult. Upon Robin's demand,

Passage shalt thou pai here under the grene-wode tre,
Or els thou shalt leve a wedde with me [187-88].³

the potter challenges Robin to a fight. There is nothing in the play to indicate that they actually fight. Immediately after the potter's challenge Robin turns to call Little John:

Lyttle John, where art thou?
Here, mayster, I make God avowe.
I tolde you, mayster, so God me save,
That you shoulde fynde the potter a knave.

¹ Repeated in lines 129-30, 178, 179 of the play.

² Little John describes his fight with the potter in stanza 6 of the ballad.

³ This line is a reminiscence of stanzas 7 and 8 in the ballad.

Holde your buckeler faste in your hande,
 And I wyll styfly by you stande,¹
 Redy for to fyghte;
 Be the knave never so stoute,
 I shall rappe hym on the snoute,
 And put hym to flyghte [192-201].

It will be observed that the verbal parallels between the last two plays and the corresponding ballads consist in most cases of lines that are repeated several times in both ballads and plays. The presence of such lines in the plays does not prove, therefore, that the authors of the plays were indebted to these particular ballads for the phraseology of the plays. These lines are in the nature of refrains, which, as we know, appear in ballads that are in no way related; they are ballad commonplaces. But the presence of these verbal resemblances to the ballads furnishes additional evidence for the statement that the Robin Hood plays are based directly on the ballads, with which both audience and authors were thoroughly familiar. This familiarity with the ballads is seen in the themes chosen for dramatization, in the echoes and reminiscences of the ballads to be found in the action and phraseology of the plays, and in the assumption that the story was so well known that the audience might readily supply the missing links in the dramatic versions, which are concerned primarily with the presentation of a single striking situation.

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¹ In the ballad only twenty-three out of eighty-three stanzas are given to the account of the fight between Robin and the potter. In the ballad Little John and the other members of the band do not appear until the potter has given Robin a beating. Then Little John taunts Robin by asking for the payment of the wager. After a rebuke from the potter Robin proposes that they exchange clothes. In the play Little John is apparently willing to tackle the potter again, or at least to assist his master in punishing the potter. The account of the fight in the play is even briefer than in the ballad. The chief emphasis, I think, in the play was not on the fight with the potter but on the trick on the sheriff. Line 198 echoes a line in stanza 17 of the ballad.